

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 30, 1958

'Home Away From Home'

Today ends USO Month. President Eisenhower proclaimed April as such and our own Monterey USO certainly went all out to carry on his wishes as honorary chairman and to furnish "a home away from home" for members of the several Armed Forces we have as our everyday guests on the Monterey Peninsula.

The USO is a voluntary federation of these seven nationally known Agencies: Young Men's Christian Assn., National Catholic Community Service, the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Young Women's Christian Assn., Salvation Army, National Travelers Aid Assn., Camp Shows, Inc.

"During the month of April the USO has made a concerted effort to inform the American public at large and the Monterey Peninsula in particular, of the work it is doing for service men and women around the world," and we quote Edwin Bliss, chairman of the Monterey board of managers of the USO, located at Webster and El Estero.

Mr. Bliss pointed out to us that the USO's program of service, vital to the morale in shooting wars, is considered by top military leaders to be even more important in this uneasy era of armed peace.

"USO has assumed the continuing responsibility for serving the off-duty needs of armed forces personnel in peace as well as in war," he said. "So long as it is necessary for America to call on millions of her youth for military duty, that responsibility will continue."

We have learned that the 23 USO overseas units now operating in all parts of the world have contributed greatly to the well-being of the service men and women. In making public here a report of the USO club, in Seoul, Korea, Mr. Bliss said that by modern standards, Korea is an extremely poor nation. Ordinarily conveniences which are taken for granted in America - modern plumbing, hot water, electric lighting - are luxuries in Korea. Most restaurants and hotels in Seoul are off-limits to military personnel.

Mr. Bliss recently attended a nation-wide meeting of the USO in the East coming home more enthused than ever about the necessity and program of USO.

"This means that the USO club is the only place where thousands of GIs down on pass from the demilitarized zone can go for rest and relaxation in non-military atmosphere, Bliss said. "When we consider the tension which results from the presence of hostile Communist troops to the north, and the bleak desolation of the demilitarized zone where even a hot bath is a rare treat, we have some idea of the importance of USO in Korea."

In addition to its overseas units, USO operates more than 200 clubs, lounges and information centers in this country.

Edwin Bliss continued, "the USO is more than just an organizer of games and a sponsor of dances, important as these can be to a homesick boy or girl new to the impersonal discipline of military life. It's a bridge between a civilian community and a military community, serving the interests of both."

Tonight, at the Monterey USO there will be a "Sock Hop," tomorrow is a "drop-in night" when checkers, chess, pool, ping pong and cards are on the agenda. Friday, May 2, the Shindiggers will folk dance and there will be a feature movie "Princess O'Rourke."

As usual Saturday evening, May 3, there will be a lobby dance. Sunday will feature an "At Home Day and Evening," including a sing, supper, pie, and cake-bingo, and a movie. Mother's Day: May 11, there will be a supper. Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 5, 6 and 7, the USO is announcing a Summer Caravan to Yosemite Valley, limited reservations, transportation, and accommodations. Those interested are asked to inquire at USO for further information,